

Build a National Park

Pre-Program Lesson Plan for the Distance Learning Program: *Ranger Careers*

Dear Teacher,

Below is a list of supplies to help prepare you and your students for your scheduled *Ranger Careers* program. Each work group will be creating their own “National Park.” Please encourage your students to start collecting recyclable materials one or two weeks before the scheduled program.

Giving the students an introduction to the National Park System is also helpful. At the end of this lesson plan, you will find some background information on national parks. Students can also write to parks to request information, visit the National Park Service website at www.nps.gov, or do research in your school library for books on national parks. If some students have visited national parks, you may want to ask them to bring in brochures, other literature, or photos from parks they have visited.

Materials:

- A large, flat piece of cardboard (at least 2ft. x 3ft. in size) for each work group. This is used as the surface on which to build their park.
- white paper
- colored paper
- markers and/or crayons
- glue
- tape
- scissors and other art supplies
- Small toys such as plastic animals, people, buildings, trees, etc.
- Natural materials collected outside such as leaves, sticks, rocks, etc.
- Recycled materials:
 - ◆ egg/milk cartons
 - ◆ cardboard
 - ◆ lids
 - ◆ small boxes
 - ◆ string
 - ◆ rubber bands
 - ◆ foil
 - ◆ magazines
 - ◆ cereal boxes
 - ◆ paper cups
 - ◆ plastic containers
 - ◆ popsicle sticks, etc

Build a National Park

School Subjects
Grade Level

Social Studies, History, Language Arts
4th – 7th

Lesson Overview

After a brief overview of what the National Park System is, students will work in teams to create their own national park site using recycled materials, and arts and crafts materials.

Lesson Objectives

The students will:

- gain a basic understanding of the history of the national park idea.
- understand the purpose and characteristics of a national park.
- understand some of the issues facing the management of parks.
- learn about the natural and cultural features that national parks protect.

Background Information

What is a National Park?

National Parks are places that represent America's beauty, wildlife, history and people. They also represent our heritage. They protect fragile or unique ecosystems, wildlife habitat, human-made or natural structures, waterways, and riparian zones. Each park has one or more of these features, which is why it is protected.

The National Park System includes parks, monuments, preserves, reserves, lakeshores, seashores, rivers, wild and scenic river ways, scenic trails, historic sites, military parks, battlefields, memorials, and recreation areas. Congress sets these areas aside so that the best of America's scenery, history, nature, and wilderness is protected for future generations. *See the National Park Service Vocabulary found on pages 2 and 3.*

The National Park Service is an agency within the Department of the Interior, created by Congress on August 25, 1916 to fulfill the mission of its Organic Act, which states:

“The Service thus established shall promote and regulate the use of the Federal areas known as national parks, monuments, and reservations . . . which purpose is to *conserve* the scenery and the natural historic objects and the wildlife therein and to *provide for the enjoyment* of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.”

The park service charges rangers to manage our parks for recreation, education, and preservation. For recreation, parks must offer certain facilities and activities, such as campgrounds, hiking trails, overlooks, tours (boat, horse, walking, etc.), lodges and restaurants. Educational efforts by the park service include visitor centers, museums, ranger-led programs, and informational pamphlets, maps, and guides. Furthermore, rangers must be able to answer questions on a variety of subjects, including interpreting the park's features, problems facing the park, and the dangers within the park. Finally, for preservation, rangers must set and enforce rules. These rules have two purposes: to protect the visitor and protect the park's resources. Rules ensure that everyone has a safe and enjoyable visit, and that resources are protected for future visitors to enjoy.

Procedure

1. Discuss the purpose of parks, their characteristics, and the different features they protect (i.e. ecosystem, natural or human-made structures, etc.). Discuss the differences between parks managed by the National Park Service and parks managed by other agencies or organizations (i.e. state/county parks, National Forest). Ask if anyone has been to a national park and, if so, which one? What did they see? What was the park protecting? Discuss the reasons for creating a national park. Who owns them?
2. Explain that the students will create their own national park. Have them think about what they would like to see/protect in a national park. Write the Organic Act (see “background information”) on the board and have the students decipher its meaning. Is it possible to conserve resources unimpaired while still providing for their public enjoyment? Brainstorm how park managers can protect park resources and provide for people to visit parks without damaging the resources.
3. Have students work as individuals or in teams to create their own national parks. Students should carefully study the literature and other material they collected from real parks. Encourage them to be as creative as school or home resources will allow. They can simply draw their park on butcher paper, create a three dimensional park on cardboard using natural and recycled material, or come up with other ideas.
4. Start by having the students design the natural and/or cultural features of their park. Remind them that the features in their park must be special enough to the entire nation to justify it becoming a national park. Have them use their imagination when designing their park resources. For instance, sticks can be used for an old-growth forest, blue cellophane can make a river, rocks can become a mountain range or a prehistoric dwelling, and small toys from home can represent wildlife or historic features such as battlefields or buildings.
5. Have them think about what park visitors will need when they visit the park and what might be needed to protect the natural and cultural resources of the park. Again, let their imaginations guide them in developing trails, motels, visitor centers, museums, restaurants, viewpoints, signs, barriers, entrance stations, souvenir and book shops, medical facilities, maintenance facilities, staff housing and offices, campgrounds, transportation facilities (roads, parking lots, busses, etc.), etc.
6. Students will need to design a brochure highlighting the features of the park and what it has to offer. Include a map, safety messages, park rules, fees charged (if any), tours and ranger programs offered. Draw pictures of the park or use cut outs from old magazines.
7. Students can then become the rangers, taking the class on a “park tour” and explaining the features and services provided. Encourage students to ask the presenters thoughtful questions.
8. After everyone has had a chance to present their park, the class should discuss what they learned. Here are some discussion ideas:
 - What was their favorite resource and/or park and why? What would they change about their park?
 - Did all the parks have resources important enough to be protected nationally?
 - Did each park have enough facilities to accommodate visitors?
 - How were the natural and cultural resources protected?
 - Were educational programs offered? What was their purpose?
 - How much would it cost to manage their park? Where would this money come from? What would the money be used for? Should an entrance fee be charged? Who should or shouldn't have to pay?
 - What should be done with the trash and sewage generated by people living in, working in, and visiting the park?
 - Who should manage the hotels, souvenir shops, and restaurants? What limitations, if any, should be put on those who provide these types of facilities.
 - What would happen to the park if... (try some different scenarios such as a large fire or other natural disaster occurred, a city grew around the park boundaries, air pollution increased, too many people came to visit, no one came to visit, there were no rules, there were no rangers, there were no facilities, there were too many facilities, people didn't think the park was important, etc.).

*Adapted from *Create a Park*, Everglades National Park

AZ Standards Addressed

- SS04-S3C4-03: Describe the importance of citizens being actively involved in the democratic process (e.g., voting, campaigning, civil and community service, volunteering, jury duty).
- SS04-S4C5-03: Describe the impact of human modifications (e.g., dams, mining, air conditioning, irrigation, agricultural) on the physical environment and ecosystems
- W04-S1C1-01: Prepare writing in a format (e.g. oral presentation) appropriate to audience and purpose
- SS05-S3C4-01: Describe ways an individual can contribute to a school or community
- W05-S1C1-01: Prepare writing in a format (e.g. oral presentation) appropriate to audience and purpose
- SS06-S3C4-01: Describe ways an individual can contribute to a school or community
- W06-S1C1-01: Prepare writing in a format (e.g. oral presentation) appropriate to audience and purpose
- SS07-S4C5-01: Identify the physical processes (e.g., conservation of natural resources, mining, water distribution in Arizona) that influence the formation and location of resources
- SS07-S4C5-03: Describe how humans modify environments (e.g., conservation, deforestation, dams) and adapt to the environment
- SS07-S4C5-06: Describe the ways human population growth can affect environments and the capacity of environments to support populations
- W07-S1C1-01: Prepare writing in a format (e.g. oral presentation) appropriate to audience and purpose